THE DEFENCE OF Conny catching.

OR

A CONFVTATION OF THOSE two iniurious Pamphlets publiſhed by *R.G.* againſt the practitioners of many Nimble-witted and myſticall Sciences.

By Cuthbert Cunny-catcher, Licenciate in Whittington Colledge.

Qui bene latuit bene vixit, dominatur enim fraus in omnibus.

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TO ALL YONG GENTLEMEN, Marchants, Apprentises, Farmers, and plaine Countrie men, *health.*

Diogenes, Gentlemen, from a counterfet Coiner of monie, became a currant corrector of maners, as absolute in the one, as dissolute in the other: Time refineth mens affects, and their humours grow different by the distinction of age. Poore Ouid that amorously writ in his youth the art of Loue, complained in his exile amongst the Getes of his wanton follyes. And Socrates age was vertuous, though his prime was licentious. So (Gentlemen) my yonger yeres had vncertaine thoughts, but now my ripe daies cals on to repentance, and I sorrow as much to see others wilfull, as I delighted once to bee wanton. The odde mad-caps I haue bin mate to, not as a companion, but as a spie, to haue an insight into their knaueries, that seeing their trains, I might eschue their snares: those mad felowes I learned at last to loath, by their owne graceleise villanies, and what I saw in them to their confusion, I can forewarne in others to my Countries commoditie. None could decypher tyranisme better than Aristippus, not that his nature was cruell, but that he was nurtured with Dionisius: The simple swaine that cuts the Lapidaries stones, can distinguish a Rubie from a Diamond onely by his labor: though I haue not practised their deceits, yet conuersing by fortune, & talking vpon purpose with such coosning copes-mates, hath giuen me light into their conceits, and I can decypher their qualities, though I vtterly mislike of their practises. To be briefe, I haue seene the world and rounded it, though not with trauell, yet with experience, and I crie out with Salomon, Omne sub sole vanitas. I haue smiled with the Italian, and worne the vipers head in my hand, and yet stopt his venome. I haue eaten Spanish Mirabolanes, and yet am nothing the more metamorphosed. France, Germanie, Poland, Denmarke, I know them all, yet not affected to anie in the forme of my life, onely I am English borne, and I haue Englisn thoughts, not a deuill incarnate, because I am Italianate, but hating the pride of Italy, because I know their peeuishnes: yet in all these Countries where I haue trauelled, I haue not seene more excesse of vanitie, than we Englishmen practise through vain-glorie: for as our wits be as ripe as anie, so our wils are more readie than their al, to put in effect any of their licentious abuses: yet amongst the rest, letting ordinarie sinnes passe, because custome hath almost made them a law, I will onely I speake of two such notable abuses, which the practitioners of them shadow with the name of Arts, as neuer haue bin heard of in anie age before. The first and chiefe is called the Art of Cunny-catching, the second, the Art of Crosbiting, two such pestilent and preiudiciall practises, as of late haue bin the ruine of infinite persons, and the subuersion and ouerthrow of many marchants, farmers, and honest minded yeomen. The first is a deceit at cards, which growing by

enormitie into a coosenage, is able to drawe (by subtill shew thereof) a man of great iudgement, to consent to his owne confusion. Yet (Gentlemen) when you shall reade this booke, written faithfully to discouer these coosning practises, thinke I goe not about to disproue or disalow the most ancient and honest pastime or recreation of the Card play, for thus much I know by reading; When the Citie of Thebes was besieged by them of Lacedemonia, being girt within strong fenced wals, and hauing men inough, & able to rebate the enemie, they found no inconuenience of force to breed their insuing bane: but famine, in that when victuals waxed scant, hunger would either make them yeeld by a fainting composition, or a miserable death. Whereupon to wearie the foo with wintering at the siege, the Thebane deuised this pollicie, they found out the method of Cards and dice, and so busied their braines with the pleasantnes of that new inuention, passing awaie the time with strange recreations & pastimes, beguiling hunger with the delight of the new sports, and eating euerie thirde daie, and playing two, so their frugall sparing of victuals kept them from famine, the Citie from sacking, and raised the foo from a mortall siege. Thus was the vse of Cards and Dice first inuented, and since among Princes highly esteemed, and allowed in all common-wealths, as a necessarie recreation of the mind: But as in time and mallice of mans nature hatcheth abuse, so good things by ill wits are wrested to the worse, & so in Cards: for from an honest recreation, it is growen to a preiudiciall practise and most high degree of coosinage, as shall be discouered in my Art of Cunny-catching, for not onely simple swaines, whose wits are in their hands, but yong Gentlemen, & Marchants are caught like Cunnies in the hay, and so lead like lambes to their confusion. The poore man that commeth to the Terme to trie his right, & layeth his land to morgage to get some crownes in his purse to see his Lawier, is drawen in by these deuellish Cunny-catchers, that at one cut at cards looseth all his monie, by which meanes, he, his wife and Children, are brought to vtter confusion and miserie. The poore prentise, whose honest mind aimeth onely at his masters profite, by these pestilent vipers of the common-wealth, are smoothly intised to the hazard of this game at cards, and robd of his masters monie, which forceth him oft times, either to runne awaie, or bankrout all, to the ouerthrow of some honest and wealthie citizen. Seeing then such a dangerous enormitie groweth by them, to the discredite of the estate of England, I would wish the Iustices appointed, as seuere censors of such fatall mischiefes, to shew themselues Patres Patriæ, by weeding out such wormes as eate awaie the sap of the tree, and rooting this base degree of coosners out of so peaceable & prosperous a Countrie, for of all practises this is the most preiudiciall. The high Lawier that challengeth a purse by the high waie side, the Foist, the Nip, the Stale, the Snap, I meane the picke pockets and cut-purses, are nothing so dangerous to meet withall, as these coosning Cunny-catchers. The Chetors that with their false Dice make a hand, and strike in at hazard or passage, with their Dice of aduantage, are nothing so dangerous as these base minded caterpillers. For they haue their vies and their reuies vpon the poore Cunnies backe, till they so ferret beat him, that they leaue him neither haire on his skin, nor hole to harbour in. There was before this many yeeres agoe, a practise put in vse by such shifting companions, called the Barnards law, wherein, as in the Art of Cunny-catching, foure persons were required to perform their coosning commoditie. The Taker vp, the Verser, the Barnard, and the Rutter, and the manner of it indeed was thus, the Taker vp seemeth a skilfull man in all things, who hath by long trauell learned without booke a thousand pollicies to insinuate himselfe into a mans acquaintance: Talke of matters of law, hee hath twentie Cases at his fingers ends, and he hath seene, and tried and ruled in the Kings Courts. Speake of grasing, and husbandrie, no man knoweth more shifts than hee, nor better which waie to

raise

raise a gainfull commoditie, and how the abuses and ouerture of prises might bee redressed. Finally, enter into what discourse they list, were it into a Broomemans facultie, he knoweth what gaines they haue for olde boots and shooes: yea, and it shall scape him hardly, but that ere your talke breake off, he will be your Countrie man at least, and peraduenture either of kin, alie, or some stale sib to you, if your reach farre surmount not his. In case he bring to passe that you bee glad of his acquaintance, then doth he carrie you to the Tauernes, and with him goes the Verser, a man of more worship than the Taker vp, and he hath the countenance of a landed man. As they are set, comes in the Barnard stumbling into their company, like some aged Farmer of the Countrie, a stranger vnto them all, that had beene at some market towne thereabout buying and selling, & there tipled so much malmsey, that he had neuer a readie word in his mouth, and is so carelesse of his monie, that out he throweth some fortie Angels on the boords end, & standing somwhat aloofe, calleth for a pint of wine, and saith: Masters, I am somwhat bold with you I praie you be not grieued if I drinke my drinke by you: and thus ministers such idle dronken talke, that the Verser who counterfeited the landed man, comes and drawes more neere to the plaine honest dealing man, and praieth him to call the Barnard more neere to laugh at his follie. Betweene them two the matter shall be so workmanly conucied and finely argued, that out commeth an olde paire of Cardes, wherat the Barnard teacheth the Verser a new game, that he saies cost him for the learning two pots of Ale, not two houres ago: the first wager is drinke, the next two pence or a groat: and lastly to be briefe, they vse the matter so, that hee that were an hundred yeere olde, and neuer played in his life for a penny, cannot refuse to be the Versers halfe, and consequently at one game at Cardes he looseth all they play for, be it an hundred pound. And if perhaps when the money is lost (to vse their word of Aret) the poore Countrieman begin to smoake them, and sweares the dronken knaue shal not get his mony so, then standeth the Rutter at the dore, and draweth his sword, and picketh a quarrell at his owne shadow, if he lack an Osler or a Tapster, or some other to brabble with, that while the sircete and company gather to the fray, as the manner is, the Barnard steales away with all the coyne, and gets him to one blind tauern or other, where these Cosners had appointed to meete.

Thus Gentlemen I haue glaunst at the Barnards lawe, which though you may perceiue it to be a preiudiciall insinuating cosenage, yet is the Art of Conny-catching so farre beyond it in subtiltie, as the deuil is more honest then the holiest Angell: For so vnlikely is it that the poore Conny should leese, that might hee pawne his stake to a pound, he would lay it that he cannot bee crof-bitten in the cut at cards, as you shall perceiue by my present discouery. Yet Gentlemen am I sore threatned by the hacksters of that filthie facultie, that if I set their practises in print, they wil cut off that hand that writes the Pamphlet, but how I feare their brauadoes, you shall perceyue by my plaine painting out of them: yea so little I esteeme such base minded braggards, that were it not I hope they would amende, I would in a sedule set downe the names of such coosning Cunny-catchers. Well, leauing them and their course of life to the honorable and the worshipfull of the land, to be censors of with iustice, haue about for a blowe at the Art of Cros-biting: I meane not Crof-biters at dice, when the Chetor with a langret, cut contrarie to the vantage, will crof-bite a bard cater tray: nor I meane not when a broaking knaue crof-biteth a Gentleman with a bad commoditie: nor when the Foist

the picke pockets(ſir reuerence I meane)is cros-bitten by the Snap, and ſo ſmoake for his purchaſe,nor when the Nip,which the common people call a Cut-purſe, hath a cros-bite by ſome bribing officer, who threatning to carrie him to priſon, takes awaie all the monie,and lets him ſlip without anie puniſhment.But I meane a more diſhonorable art,when a baſe rogue,either kœpeth a whoore as his friend, or marries one to be his maintainer,and with her not only cros-bites men of good calling,but eſpecially poore ignorant countrie Farmers,who(God wot)be by them lead like ſheepe to the ſlaughter. Thus(gentle Readers) haue I giuen you a light in briefe,what I meane to proſecute at large, and ſo with humble ſute to all Iuſtices,that they will ſeeke to roote out theſe two roagiſh Arts,I commit you to the Almightie.

Yours

Robert Greene.

THE DEFENCE OF Conny-catching.

I Cannot but wonder maister R. G. what Poeticall fury made you so fantasticke, to wryte against Conny-catchers? Was your braine so barraine that you had no other subiectes, or your wittes so dried with dreaming of loue Pamphlettes, that you had no other humour left, but satirically with Diogenes, to snarle at all mens manners? You neuer sounde in Tully nor Aristotle, what a fetter or a verser was.

It had been the part of a Scholler, to haue written seriously of some graue subiect, either Philosophically to haue shewen how you were proficient in Cambridge, or diuinely to haue manifested your religion to the world. Such triuiall trinkets and threedbare trash, had better seemed T. D. whose braines beaten to the yarking vp of Ballades, might more lawfully haue glaunst at the quaint conceites of conny-catching and crosse-biting.

But to this my obiection, mee thinkes I heare your maship learnedly reply, Nascimur pro patria: Euery man is not borne for himselfe, but for his country: and that the ende of all studious indeuours ought to tende to the aduancing of vertue, or suppressing of vice in the common-wealth. So that you haue herein done the part of a good subiect, and a good scholler, to anatomize such secret vsilanies as are practised by cosoning companions, to the ouerthrow of the simple people: for by the discouery of such pernitious lawes, you seeke to roote out of the common-wealth, such ill and licentious liuing persons, as do *Ex alieno succo viuere*, liue of the sweat of other mens browes, and vnder subtil shiftes of witte abused, seeke to ruine the flourishing estate of Englande. These you call vipers, moathes of the common-wealth, caterpillers worse then God rayned downe on Egypt, rotten flesh which

must

muſt be diuided from the whole.

Enſe reſecandum eſt ne pars ſincera trahatur.

This maiſter R. G. I know will be your anſwere, as it is the pretended cauſe of your iniurious Pamphlets. And indeede it is very well done, but greater had your praiſe been, if you had entered into the nature of more groſſe abuſes, and ſet downe the particular enormities that growe from ſuche palpable villanies. For truth it is, that this is the Iron age, wherein iniquitie hath the vpper hande, and all conditions and eſtates of men ſeeke to liue by their wittes, and he is counted wiſeſt, that hath the deepeſt inſight into the getting of gaines: every thing now that is found profitable, is counted honeſt and lawfull: and men are valued by theyr wealth, not by their vertues. Hee that cannot diſſemble cannot liue, and men put their ſonnes now a dayes Apprentiſes, not to learne trades and occupations, but craftes and myſteries.

If then witte in this age be counted a great patrimony, and ſubtletie an inſeparable accident to all eſtates, why ſhould you bee ſo ſpitefull maiſter R. G. to poore Conny-catchers aboue all the reſt, ſith they are the ſimpleſt ſoules of all in ſhifting to liue in this ouer wiſe worlde.

But you play like the Spider that makes her webbe to intrap and ſnare little Flies, but weaues it ſo ſlenderly, that the great ones breake through without any dammage. You ſtraine Gnats, and paſſe ouer Elephants: you ſquare the ponde of a fewe croaking Frogges, and leaue behinde an infinite number of moſt venemous Scorpions. You decypher poore Conny-catchers, that perhaps with a tricke at cardes, winne fortie ſhillings from a churle that can ſpare it, and neuer talke of thoſe Caterpillers that vndoe the poore, ruine whole Lordſhips, infect the common-wealth, and delight in nothing but in wrongfull getting and vſe louring of pelfe, when as ſuch be the greateſt Conny-catchers of all, as by your leaue maiſter R G. I will make manifeſt.

Sir reuerence on your worſhip, had you ſuch a moate in your eye, that you could not ſee thoſe Fox-furd Gentlemen that hyde vnder their gownes faced with foynes, more falſhoode then all the Conny-catchers in England beſide, thoſe miſerable Vſurers (I meane) that like Vultures pray vppon the ſpoyle of the poore,

ſleeping

fleeping with his neighbors pledges all night in his boſome, and feeding vpon forfaits and penalties, as the rauens doe vppon carren? If his poore neighbor want to ſupply his need, eyther for his houſhold neceſſaries, or his rent at the day, he will not lende a peny for charitie, all his money is abroad: but if he offer him either cow or ſow, mare or horſe, or the very corne ſcarſe ſprowted out of the ground to ſel, ſo the bargaine may be cheape, though to the beggery of the poore man, hee choppes with him ſtraight, and makes the poore Conny fare the worſe all the yeare after. Why write you not of theſe Conny-catchers Maiſter R. G.?

Beſides if pawnes come, as the leaſe of a houſe, or the fee ſimple in morgage, hee can out of his furd caſſocke draw money to lend: but the olde Cole hath ſuch quirkes and quiddities in the conueyance, ſuch prouiſoes, ſuch dayes, howers, nay minutes of payments, that if his neighbor breake but a moment, he takes the forfayt, and like a pinke-eyed Ferret ſo clawes the poore Cony in the burrow, that he leaues no haire on his breach nor on his backe ere he partes with him. Are not theſe vipers of the commonweith, and to be exclaimde againſt, not in ſmal Pamphlets, but in great volumes?

You ſet downe how there bee requiſite Setters and Uerſers in Conny-catching, and be there not ſo I pray you in Uſury? for when a young youthful Gentleman, giuen a little to laſh out liberalley, wanteth money, makes hee not his moane firſt to the Broker, as ſubtil a knaue to induce him to his ouerthrowe, as the wylieſt Setter or Uerſer in England: and he muſt be feede to ſpeake to the Uſurer, and haue ſo much in the pound for his labour: then he ſhal haue graunt of money and commodities together, ſo that if he borrow a hundred pound, he ſhal haue forty in fluer, and threeſcore in wares, dead ſtuffe God wot: as Lute ſtrings, Hobby horſes, or (if he be greatly fauored) browne paper or cloath, and that ſhootes out in the laſh. Then his lande is turnde ouer in ſtatute or recognizance for ſixe moneths and ſixe moneths, ſo that he payes ſome thirty in the hundred to the Uſurer, beſide the Scriuener he hath a blind ſhare: but when he comes to ſel his threeſcore pound commodities, tis wel if he get fiue and thirtie.

Thus is the poore gentleman made a meere and simple Conny, and verst vpon to the vttermost, and yet if he breake his day, loseth as much land as cost his father a thousand markes.

Is not this coosenage and Conny-catching Maister R.G. and more daily practised in England, and more hurtful then our poore shifting at Cardes, and yet your mashippe can winke at the cause they be wealthy, but Cuthbert Conny-catcher cares for none of them no more then they care for him, and therfore wil reueale all. And because Maister R.G. you were pleasant in examples, Ile tel you a tale of an Vsurer, done within a mile of a knaues head, and since the Cuckow sung last, and it fell out thus.

A pleasant tale of an Vsurer.

IT fortuned that a young gentleman not farre off from Cockermouth, was somewhat slipt behind hand, and growne in debt, so that he durst hardly shew his head for feare of his creditors, and hauing wife and children to maintaine, although he had a proper land, yet wanting money to stocke his ground, he liued very bare: whereupon he determined with himselfe to goe to an olde penny-father that dwelt hard by him, and to borrow some money of him, and so to lay his land in mortgage for the repayment of it.

He no sooner made the motion but it was accepted, for it was a goodly Lordship, worth in rent of assise seuen score pound by the yeare, and did abbut vpon the Vsurers ground, which drew the old churle to be maruellous willing to disburse money, so that he was content to lende him two hundred markes for three yeare according to the statute, so that he might haue the land for assurance of his money.

The gentleman agreed to that, and promised to acknowledge a statute staple to him, with letters of defeysance. The Vsurer (although he like this wel, and saw the yong man offered more than reason required) yet had a further feth to haue the land his whatsoeuer should chaunce, and therefore he began to verse vppon the poore Conny thus.

Sir (quoth he) if I did not pitie your estate, I would not lende you my money at such a rate: for whereas you haue it after ten

pounds

pounds in the hundred, I can make it worth thirtie. But seeing the distresse you your wife and children are in, and considering all growes through your owne liberall nature, I compassionate you the more, and would do for you as for mine owne sonne: therefore if you shal thinke good to follow it, I wil giue you fatherly aduise. I knowe you are greatly indebted, and haue many vnmercifull creditors, and they haue you in suit, and I doubt ere long wil haue some extent against your lands, so shal you be vterly vndone, and I greatly incumbred. Therefore to auoyd all this, in my iudgement it were best for you to make a deed of gift of all your landes, without condition or promise, to some one faythful friend or other, in whom you may repose credite, so shal your enemies haue no aduauntage against you: and seeing they shall haue nothing but your bare body lyable to their executions, they wil take the more easie and speedy composition. I thinke this the surest way, and if you durst repose your selfe in me, God is my witnesse, I would be to you as your father if he liued. How say you to this compendious tale Maister R. G. could the proudest setter or verser in the world haue drawne on a Conny more cunningly?

Wel, againe to our young gentleman, who simply (with teares in his eyes to heare the kindnes of the Vsurer) thanked him hartily, and deferred not to put in practise his counsell, for he made an absolute deed of gift from wife and children to this Vsurer of all his Lordshippe, and so had the two hundred markes vpon the playne forfait of a band.

To be short, the money made him and his merry, and yet he did husband it so wel, that he not onely duly paid the interest, but stocke his grounds, and began to grow out of debt, so that his creditors were willing to beare with him. Against the three yeares were expired, he made shift by the helpe of his friends for the money, and carryed it home to the Vsurer, thanking him greatly, and crauing a returne of his deed of gift. Nay soft sir (sayth the olde Churle) that bargaine is yet to make, the land is mine to mee and mine heyres for euer, by a deed of gift from your owne hand, and what can be more sure: take the money if you please, and there is your band, but for the Lordship I wil enter on it to morrow: yet if you wil be my tenant, you shall haue it before another, and that is all

the fauour you shal haue of me.

At this the Gentleman was amazed, and began to plead conscience with him, but in vaine: whereuppon he went sorrowfully home and told his wife, who as a woman halfe lunatike ran with hir little children to his house, and cryed out, but bootlesse: For although they called him before the chiefe of the country, yet sith the law had graunted him the fee simple there of he would not part withal: so that this distressed gentleman was faine to become tenant to this Usurer, and for two hundred marks to lose a Lordship worth six or seuen thousand pounds. I pray you was not this an old Conycatcher M. R. G. that could lurtch a poore Conny of so many thousands at one time? whether is our crossing at cardes more perilous to the commonwelth than this cosenage for land? you winke at it, but I wil tel all, yet heare out the end of my tale, for as fortune fel out, the Usurer was made a Cony himselfe.

The gentleman and his wife smothering this with patience, she that had a reaching wit, & hair brain reuenge in hir head, counseld hir husband to make a voyage from home, & to stay a weeke or two: and (q. she) before you come againe you shal see mee venter faire for the land. The gentleman willing to let his wife practise hir wits, went his way, and left al to his wiues discretion. She after hir husband was foure or fiue dayes from home, was visited by the Usurer, who vsed hir very kindly, and sent victuals to hir house, promising to sup with hir that night, and that she should not want any thing in hir husbands absence. The gentlewoman with gratious acceptance thanked him, and had diuers of hir neighbors to beare him company, hauing a further reatch in hir heade then he suspected. For the olde Chuule comming an hower before Supper time, euen as she hir selfe would wish, after an amorous wche or two, as olde Jades wynne when they cannot wagge the tayle, began to be very pleasant with his tenant, and desired her to shew him al the roomes in hir house, and happily (saith he) if I die without issue, I may giue it to your children, for my conscience bids me be fauorable to you.

The gentlewoman lead him through euery part, and at last brought him into a backe roome much like a backhouse, where she said thus vnto him.

Sir,

Sir, this roome is the most vnhandsomest in all the house, but if there were a dormar built to it, and these shut windows made bay windows and glazd, it would make the properest parlour in al the house: for (saith she) put your head out at this window, and looke what a sweet prospect belongs vnto it.

The Usurer mistrusting nothing, thrust out his craftie sconce, and the Gentlewoman shut to the windowe, and called her maids to helpe, where they bound and pinyond the caterpillers armes fast, and then stood he with his head into a backeyard, as if he had beene on a pillory, and struggle he durst not for stirring himselfe. When she had him thus at the bauntage, she got a couple of fire pring nayles and a hammer, and went into the yard, hauing her children attending vpon her, euery one with a sharpe knife in their handes, and then comming to him with a sterne countenance, shee looked as Medea did when she attempted reuenge against Iason. The Usurer seeing this tragedie, was afraid of his life, and cryed out, but in vaine, for her maydes made such a noyse, that his shrieking could not be heard, whilest she nayled one eare fast to the windowe, and the other to the stanchel, then began she to vse these words vnto him.

Ah vile and iniurious caterpiller, God hath sent thee to seeke thine owne reuenge, and now I and my children will performe it. For sith thy wealth doth so countenance thee, that we cannot haue thee punisht for thy coosenage, I my selfe will bee Iustice, Iudge, and Executioner: for as the Pillory belongs to such a villaine, so haue I nayled thy eares and they shal be cut off to the perpetuall example of such purloining reprobates, and the executers shal bee these little infants, whose right without conscience or mercie thou so wrongfully detainest. Looke on this old Churle litle babes, this is he that with his coosenage wil driue you to beg and want in your age, and at this instant brings your Father to all this present miserie, haue no pittie vpon him, but you two cut off his eares, and thou (quoth she to the eldest) cut off his nose, and so be reuenged on the villaine whatsoeuer fortune me for my labour. At this the Usurer cryed out, and bad her stay her children, and hee would restore the house & land again to his husband. I cannot beleeue thee bale churle q. she, for thou that wouldst periure thy selfe

against so honest a Gentleman as my husband, wil not sticke to forsweare thy selfe were thou at liberty and therefore I wil mangle thee to the uttermost. As thus she was ready to haue her children fal vpon him, one of hir maydes came running in, and told her, her neighbors were come to supper: bid them come in, quoth she, and behold this spectacle. Although the Vsurer was passing loath to haue his neighbors see him thus tyrannously vsed, yet in they came, and when they saw him thus mannerly in a new made pillory, and his eares fast nayled, some wondred, some laught, and all stood amazed, till the Gentlewoman discourst to them all the coosenage, and how she meant to be reuenged: some of them perswaded her to let him go, others were silent, and some bad him confesse: he hearing them debate the matter, and not to offer to helpe him, cryed out: why, and stand you staring on me neighbors, and wil not you saue my life? No quoth the Gentlewoman, he or she that stirs to helpe thee shal pay dearely for it, and therefore my boyes, off with his eares: then he cryed out, but stay, and he would confesse all, when from point to point he rehearst how he had coosened hir husband by a deed of gift only made to him in trust, and there was content to giue him the two hundreth markes freely for amends, and to yeeld vp before any men of worship the land againe into his possession, and vpon that he bad them all beare witnes. Then the gentlewoman let loose his eares, and let slip his head, and away went he home with his bloody lugges, and tarryed not to take part of the meat he had sent, but the gentlewoman & her neighbors made merry therwith, and laught hartily at the vsage of the vsurer. The next day it was bruted abroad, and came to the eares of the worshipful of the country, who sate in commission vppon it, and found out the coosenage of the Vsurer, so they praised the witte of the Gentlewoman, restored her husband to the land, and the old churle remained in discredit, and was a laughing stocke to all the country all his life after.

I pray you what say you to Mounser the Miller with the gilden thumbe, whether thinke you him a Conny catcher or no? that robs euery poore man of his meale and corne, and takes towle at his owne pleasure, how many Conyes doth hee take vp in a yeare? for when he brings them wheat to the Mill, he sels them meale of

their

their owne corne in the market. I omit Miles the Millers coosenage for wenching affaires, as no doubt in these causes they bee mighty Cony-catchers, and meane to speake of their pollicie in filtching and stealing of meale. For you must note, that our iolly Miller doth not only verse vpon the pooze and rich for their towle, but hath falſe hoppers conueyed vnder the fal of his Mill, where al the best of the meale runs by, this is, if the partie be by that byngeth the corne: but because many men haue many eyes, the Miller will driue them off for their gricke for a day or two, and then he playes his prancks at his owne pleasure. I need not tel that stale iest of the Gentlemans Miller that kept Court and Leet once euery weeke, and vsed to set in euery sacke a candle, and so summon the owners to appeare by their names, if they came not, as they were farre inough from that place, then he amerced them, and so tooke treple towle of euery sacke. One night amongst the rest, the Gentleman his maister was vnder the Mill, and heard all his knauery, how euery one was called, and paid his amerciament, at last he heard his owne name called, and then stepping vp the Ladder, he bad stay, for he was there to make his appearance. I do imagine that the Miller was blanke, and perhaps his Maister called him knaue, but the For the more he is curst the better he fares, and the oftener the Miller is called theefe, the richer he waxeth: and therefore doe men rightly by a by word bid the Miller put out, and if he asketh what, they say a theeues head and a theeues paire of eares: for such graund Cony-catchers are these Millers, that he that cannot verse vpon a pooze mans sacke, is said to be borne with a golden thumbe. But that you may see more plainly their knauery, Ile tel you a pleasant tale, performed not many yeares since by a Miller in Enfield Mil, ten miles from London, and an Alewiues boy of Edmondton, but because they are al at this present aliue, I will conceale their names, but thus it fel out.

A pleasant Tale of a Miller and an Alewiues Boy of Edmondton.

AN Alewife of Edmondton, who had a great vent for spiced Cakes, sent her sonne often to Endfield Mill for to haue her

wheat ground, so that the Boy who was of a quicke spirit & ryppe wit, grew very familiar both with the Miller and his man, and his man, and could get his corne sooner put in the Mil then any Boy in the country beside. It fortuned on a time, that this good wife wanting meale, bad her Boy hie to the Mil, and be at home that night without faile, for she had not a pint of floure in the house. Jacke her sonne, for so we wil cal his name, layes his sacke on his mares backe, and away he rides singing towardes Endfield: as he rode, he mette at the washes with the Miller, and gaue him the time of the day, Godfather quoth he, whither ride you? to London Jacke quoth the Miller: Oh good Godfather quoth the boy, tel mee what store of griest is at the Mil? marry great store quoth the Miller: but Jacke if thou wilt do me an arrant to my man, Ile send thee by a token that thou shalt haue thy corn cast on ground aboone as thou commest, Ile say and doe what you wil to be dispatcht, for my mother hath neyther Cakes nor floure at home: then Jacke saith the Miller, bid my man grind thy corne next, by that token he looke to my Bitch and feed her wel. I wil Godfather saith the Boy, and rides his way, and maruelled with himself what Bitch it was that he bad his man feede, considering for two or three yeares he had vide to the Mil, and neuer saw a Dog nor Bitch, but a little prickeard Shault that kept the Mil doore. Riding thus musing with himselfe, at last he came to Endfield, and there he had his corne wound vp: assoon as he came vp the stairs, the Millers man being somewhat sleepy began to aske Jack drowsily what newes. Marry quoth the Boy, the newes is this, that I must haue my corne laide on next: soft Jacke quoth the Millers man, your turne wil not come afore midnight, but ye are alwayes in hast, soft fire makes sweet mault, your betters shal be serued afore you this time. Not so quoth the Boy, for I met my Godfather at the washes riding to London, and tolde him what hast I had, and so he bids my griest shal be layde on next, by that token you must looke to his Bitch and feed her wel. At that the Millers man smilde, and said he should be the next, and so rose vp and turned a pinne behind the Hopper. Jacke markt al this, and being a wily and a witty Boy, mused where this Bitch should be, and seeing none, began to suspect some knauery, and therefore being very

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familiar, was bold to looke about in euery corner, while the man was busie about the Hopper, at last Jacke turning vp a cloath that hung before the Trough, spied vnder the Hopper belowe, where a great Poake was tyed with a cord almost ful of fine floure, that ranne at a false hole vnderneath, and could not be spyed by any meanes, Jacke seeing this, beganne to suspect this was the Millers Bitch that hee commanded his man to feede, and so smiled and let it alone: at last when the corne was ground off that was in the Hopper, Jacke layde on his, and was very busie about it himselfe, so that the Millers man set him downe and tooke a nap, knowing the Boye could looke to the mill almost as wel as himselfe, Jacke all this while had an eye to the Bitch, and determined at last to slip her haulter, which he warily performed, for when his corne was ground and he had put vp his meale, he whipst asunder the cord with his knife that held the Poake, & thrust it into the mouth of his sacke, now there was in the Poake a bushell and more of passing fine floure, that the Millers Bitch had eaten that day, assoone as Jacke had tyed vp his sacke, there was strining who should laye on corne next, so that the Millers man wakte, and Jacke destring one to helpe him vp with his corne, tooke his leaue and went his way, tyding merely homeward, smiling to thinke how he had cousoned the Miller, as he roade, at that same place where hee mette the Miller outward, he met him homeward, How now Jacke quoth the Miller hast ground, I, I thanke you Godfather quoth the Boy, but didst remember my arrant to my man sayes he, didst bid him looke to my Bitch wel, Oh Godfather quoth the Boy, take no care for your Bitch she is wel, for I haue her here in my sacke whelpes and all, away tydes Jacke at this laughing, and the Miller grieuing, but when he found it true, I leaue you to gesse how hee and his man dealt togither, but how the Alewife spotted at the knauery of her sonne when he told her all the ieast, that imagine, but how soeuer for all that, Jack was euer welcome to the Mill and ground before any, and whose soeuer sacke fedde the Bitch, Jackes scapte euer towle-free, that hee might conceale the Millers subtiltie.

Was not this Miller a Conny-catcher maister R. G? What should I talke of the baser sort of men, whose occupation cannot bee vpholden without craft, there is no mysterie nor science almost, wherin a man may thriue, without it be lincked to this famous Art of Conny-catching. The Alewife vnles she nicke her Pots and Conny-catch

her guestes with stone Pottes and petty Cannes, can hardly paye her Brewer, nay and yet that wil not serue, the chalke must walke to set vp now & then a shilling or two too much, or else the rent wil not bee answered at the quarter day, besides ostrey, faggots, and faire chambring, and pretty wenches that haue no wages, but what they get by making of beddes. I know some Taphouses about the Subberbes, where they buy a shoulder of mutton for two groats, and sel it to their ghuest for two shillings, and yet haue no female friends to sup withall, let such take heed, least my fathers white Hoyse woe saddle & bridle & they go on foote to the diuel on pilgrimage. Tush maister R.G. God is my witnesse, I haue seene Chaunlers about London, haue two paire of waites, and when the searchers come, they shewe them those that are sealed, but when their poore neighbors buy ware, they vse them that lack weight. I condemne not all, but let such amend as are toucht at the quick. And is not this flat Conny-catching, yes, if it please your maship & worser. Why the base sort of Ostlers haue their shifts, & the crue of S. Patrickes Costermongers, can sell a simple man a crab for a pipping. And but that I haue loued wine wel, I wold touch both the Vintner and his wife, for they haue such brewing and tunning, such chopping and changing, such mingling & mixing, what of wine with water in the quart pot, and tempering one wine with an other in the vessel, that it is hard to get a neate cup of wine and simple of it selfe, in most of our ordinary Tauerns, & do not they make poore men connies, that for their currant mony giue them counterfeit wine.

What say you to the Butcher with his prickes, that hath pollicies to puffe vp his meate to please the eye, is not al his craft vsed to draw the poore Conny to ryd him of his ware. Hath not the Draper his darke shop to shadow the dye and wooll of his cloth, and all to make the country Gentleman or Farmer a conny. What trade can maintaine his traffique? what science vphold it self? what man liue, vnles he growe into the nature of a Cony-catcher? Doo not the Lawyers make long Pleaes, stand vpon their demurres, and haue their quirks and quiddities to make his poore Client a Conny? I speake not generally, for so they be the ministers of iustice, and the Patrons of the poore mens right, but particularly of such as hold gaines their God, and esteeme more of coyne then of conscience. I remember by the way a merry iest performed by a Foole, yet wittily hit home at hazard, as blinde men shoote the Crow.

Conny catching

A pleasant Tale of Will Sommers.

KIng Henry the eight of famous memory, walking one day in his privy Garden, with Will Sommers his Foole, it fortuned that two Lawyers had a suite vnto his maiestie for one piece of grounde that was almost out of lease and in the Kinges gift, and at time put by their Supplication to his highnesse, and at that instant one of the Pantry that had been a long seruiture, had spyed out the same land, and exhibited his petition for the same gift, so that in one houre, all the three Supplications were giuen to the King, which his highnesse noting, and being as then pleasantly disposed, he reuealed it to them that were by him, how there were three Fishes at one bayte, and all gaped for a benefice, and hee stood in doubt on whome to bestowe it, and so shewed them the Supplications, the Courtiers spoke for their fellow, except two that were feed by the Lawyers, and they particularly pleaded for their friendes, yelding many reasons to the King on both sides. At last his maiestie sayd, hee would referre the matter to Will Sommers, which of them his Foole thought most worthy of it should haue the lande. Will was glad of this, and loued him of the Pantrie wel, and resolued he should haue the ground, but the Foole brought it about with pretty iest, Marry quoth he, what are these two Lawiers? I Will saide the King, then quoth the Foole, I wil vse them as they vse their poore clients. Looke here quoth he, I haue a Walnut in my hand, and I wil diuide it among the three, so Will crackt it, and gaue to one Lawyer one shel, and to an other the other shel, and to him of the Pantry the meat, so that thy gift be Harry, quoth he, this Lawyer shal haue good Bookes, and this faire promises, but my fellow of the Pantry shal haue the land. For thus deale they with their clyents, two men goe to two, and spende all that they haue vpon the Lawe, and at last, haue nothing but bare shales for their labour. At this, the King and his Noble men laught: the Yeoman of the Pantry had the gift, and the Lawyers went home with fleas in their eares, by a Foules verdite. I rehearst this Act to shew how men of Lawe feede on poore mens purses, and makes their country clyents, [illegible] connyes. But leauing these common courses and triuial [illegible] wil shew you maister R. G. of a kinde of Conny-catchers, [illegible] yet palleth al these.

There bee in Englande, but especially about London, certaine quaint, pickt, and neate companions, attyred in their apparel, [illegible]

alla mode de Fraunce, with a side Cloake, and a hat of a high blocke and a broad brimme, as if hee could with his head cosmographise the world in a moment, or elle Allespanyole, with a straight bombaste sleeue like a quaile pipe, his short Cloake, and his Rapier hanging as if he were entering the List to a desperate Combate: his beard squared with such Art, eyther with his mustachies after the lash of Lions, standing as stiffe as if he wore a Ruler in his mouth, or elle nickt off with the Italian cut, as if he ment to professe one faith with the vpper lippe, and an other with his nether lippe, and then hee must be Marquisaded, with a side peake pendent, eyther sharpe lyke the single of a Deere, or curtold lyke the broad ende of a Moule spade. This Gentleman forsooth, hanteth Tabling houses, Tauerns, and such places, where yong nouices resort, & can fit his humor to all companies, and openly shadoweth his disguise with the name of a Trauciler, so that he will haue a superficiall slight into certaine phrases of euerie language, and pronounce them in such a grace, as if almost hee were that Countryman borne: then shal you heare him baunt of his trauels, and tel what wonders he hath seene in strange countries: how he hath bin at Saint Iames of Gompostella in Spaine, at Madril in the Kings Court: and then drawing out his blade, hee claps it on the boord, and and sweares he bought that in Toledo: then will he rone to Venice, and with a sigh, discouer the situation of the citie, how it is seated two Leagues from Terra frenia, in the Sea, and speake of Rialto Trenise and Murano, where they make Glasses: and to set the young gētlemans teeth an edge, he wil make a long tale of La Strado Courtizano, wher the beautiful Curtizans dwel, discribing their excellency, and what angellical creatures they be, and how amorously they wil entertaine strangers. Tush, he wil discourse the state of Barbary, and there to Eschites and Alcaires, and from thence leape to Fraunce, Denmarke, and Germany, After all concluding thus.

What is a Gentleman (saith he) without trauaile? euen as a man without one eye. The sight of sundry countries made Vlisses so famous: bought witte is the sweetest, and experience goeth beyond all Patrymonies. Did young Gentlemen, as wel as I, know the pleasure & profit of trauel, they would not keep them at home within their natiue continent: but visit the world, & win more wisedome in trauelling two or three yeeres, then all the wealth their Ancestors left them to possesse. Ah the sweet sight of ladies, the strange wonders in cities,

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and the diuers manners of men and theyr conditions, were able to rauish a yong Gentlemans sences with the surket of content, and what is a thousand pound spent to the obtaining of those pleasures.

All these Nouelties doth this pipned Bragout boast on, when his only trauaile hath been to look on a faire day, from Douer Clifts to Callis, neuer hauing stept a foot out of England, but surueyed the Maps, and heard others talke what they knew by experience. Thus decking himselfe like the Daw with the faire feathers of other birds, and discoursing what he heard other men report, hee grew so plausible among yoong Gentlemen, that he got his Ordinary at the least, and some gratious thanks for his labour. But happily some amongst many, tickled with the desire to see strange countries, and drawne on by his alluring words, would ioyne with him, and question if he meant euer to trauaile againe. He straight after he hath bitten his peake by the end, Alla Neopolitano begins thus to reply.

Sir, although a man of my trauel and experience might be satisfied in the sight of countries, yet so insatiat is the desire of trauailing, that if perhaps a yong Gentleman of a liberall and courteous nature, were desirous to see Ierusalem or Constantinople, would be wel acquit my paines and followe my counsaile, I would bestow a yeare or two with him out of England. To be breefe, if the Gentleman iumpe with him, then doth he cause him to sel some Lordship, and put some thousand or two thousand pound in the banke to be receyued by letters of exchange: and because the gentleman is ignorant, my yong Maister his guide must haue the disposing of it: which he so wel sets out, that the poore gentleman neuer sees any returne of his mony after. Then must store of suites of apparel be bought and furnisht euery way: at last, he names a ship wherein they should passe, and so downe to Grauesend they go, and there he leaues the yoong nouice, fleest of his money and wo begone, as farre from trauaile as Miles the merry Cobler of Shorditch, that swore he would neuer trauaile further, than from his shop to the Alehouse. I pray you cal you not these fine witted fellowes Conny-catchers Maister R. G.?

But now Sir by your leaue a little, what if I should proue you a Conny-catcher Maister R. G. would it not make you blush at the matter? Ile go as neare to it as the Fryer did to his Hostesse mayde, when the Clarke of the parish tooke him at Leuatem at midnight. Aske the Queens Players, if you sold them not Orlando Furioso

for twenty Nobles, and when they were in the country, sold the same Play to the Lord Admirals men for as much more. Was not this plaine Conny-catching Maister R.G?

But I heare when this was obiected, that you made this excuse: that there was no more faith to be held with Players, than with them that valued faith at the price of a feather: for as they were Comædians to act, so the actions of their liues were Cameleon like, that they were vncertaine, variable, time pleasers, men that measured honestie by profite, and that regarded their Authors not by desart, but by necessitie of time. If this may serue you for a shadow, let mee vse it for an excuse of our Carp Conny-catching: for when we meet a country Farmar with a full purse, a miserable miser, that eyther rackes his Tenants rents, or selles his graine in the market at an vnreasonable rate: we hold it a deuotion to make him a Conny, in that he is a Caterpiller to others, and gets that by pilling and polling of the poore, that we strip him of by sleight and agilitie of wit.

Is there not heere resident about London, a crew of terryble Hacksters in the habite of Gentlemen, well apparell, and yet some weare bootes for want of stockings, with a locke woorne at their left eare for their mistrisse fauour, his Rapper Alla reuolto, his Poynado pendent ready for the stab, and caulieuarst like a warlike Magnifico: yet for all this outward shew of pride, inwardly they be humble in minde, and despise worldly welth, for you shal neuer take them with a penny in their purse. These Souldados, for vnder that profession most of them wander, haue a pollicie to scourge Alehouses, for where they light in, they neuer leape out, till they haue shewed their Arithmatike with chalke on euery post in the house, figured in Cyphers like round Os, till they make the goodman cry O, O, O, as if hee should cal an Oyes at Size or Sessions. Now sir, they haue sundry shifts to maintaine them in this vertling, for eyther they creep in with the goodwife, and so vndoo the goodman, or els they beare it out with great braggs if the Host be simple, or els they trip him in some woordes when he is tipsy, that he hath spoken against some Iustice of peace or other, or some other great man: and then they hold him at a bay with that, til his backe almost breake. Thus shift they from house to house, hauing this prouerbe amongst them: Such must eate as are hungry and they must pay that haue money. Call you not these Conny-catchers Maister R.G.?

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It were an endlesse peece of worke, to discouer the abhominable life of brokers, whose shops are the very temples of the deuill, themselues his priests, and their bookes of account more damnable, than the Alcoran set out by Mahomet: for as they induce yoong gentlemen to pawne their lands, as I said before: so they are ready (the more is the pitty that it is suffered) to receiue any goods, howsoeuer it bee come by, hauing their shoppes, (as they say) a lawfull market to buy and sell in, so that whence growes so many Lifts about London, but in that they haue Brokers their friends, to buy whatsoeuer they purloyne & steale? And yet is the Picklocke, Lift, or Hooker, that brings ỳ stolne goods, made a flat Conny, and vsed as an Instrument onely of their villany: for suppose he hath lifted a gowne or a cloake, or so many parcels as are worth tenne pounds, and venters his life in hazard for the obtaining of it: the miserable Caterpiller the Broker, wil thinke hee dealeth liberally with him if he giue him forty shillings, so doth he not onely maintaine fellony, but like a theefe receiues the theefe. And are not these graund Conny-catchers Maister R.G.?

I knew not farre from Fleetbridge a Haberdasher, it were a good deed to take Paine to tel his name, that tooke of a boy of seuen yeere old a Rapier worth forty shillinges, and a stitcht taffata Hat worth ten, and all for fiue shillings: the Gentleman, father to the child, was sicke when necessitie drone him thus nigh, to lay his weapon and his Bonnet to pawne, and assoone as he recouered, which was within fiue weeks after, sent the money and twelue pence for the lone, to haue the parcels againe. But this Cutthroates answer was, the Boy had made him a bil of sale of his hand for a moneth, and the day was broken, and he had made the best of the Rapier and Hat. Was not this a Iewe and a notable Conny-catcher Maister R.G.

It had beene wel if you had rould out your Rhetorike against such a rakehel. But come to they honest kinde of life, and you shal see how they stand vpon circumstances: if you borrow but two shillings, there must be a groat for the money, and a groat for the Bil of sale, and this must bee renewed euery moneth: so that they resemble the Boxe at dice, which beeing wel payd all night, will in the morning be the greatest winner.

Wert not a merry iest to haue about againe Maister R.G. with your poetical Brethren: amongst the which, one learned Hypocrite, that could brooke no abuses in the Commonwealth, was so zealous,

that he began to put an English the Saint in the Legend, for the holinesse of her life: and forgot not so much as her dogge, as Tobies was remembred, that wagged his tayle at the sight of his olde Mistresse. This pure Martinist (if he were not worse) had a combat betweene the flesh and the spirite, that he must needes haue a Wife, which he cunningly conny-catcht in this manner.

A pleasant Tale how a holy brother Conny-catcht for a Wife.

FIrst you must vnderstand, that he was a kind of Scholastical paynon, nourst vp onely at Grammer schoole, least going to the Vniuersitie, through his nimble witte, too much learning should make him mad. So he had pakt As in præsenti, and was gone a proficient as farre as Carmen Heroicum: for he pronounst his wordes like a bragout, and helde vp his head like a Malt-horse, and could talke against Bishops, and wish very mannerly the discipline of the Primitiue Church were restored. Now sir, this Gentleman had espyed (I dare not say about Fleetstreet) a proper mayd, who had giuen hir by the decease of her Father foure hundred pound in money, besides certaine faire houses in the Cittie: to this girle goeth this proper Greek a wooing, naming himselfe to be a Gentleman of Cheshire, and only sonne and heyre to his Father, who was a man of great reuenewes: and to make the matter more plausible, he had attyred his owne brother very orderly in a blew coat, and made him his seruingman, who, though he were eldest, yet to aduaunce his yonger brother to so good a marriage, was content to lie, cog, and flatter, and to take any seruile paines, to sooth vp the matter: insomuch that when her Father in law (for his mother was marryed againe, to an honest, vertuous, and substantial man in Fleetstreet or thereabouts) heard how this yoong Gentleman was a Suiter to his daughter in law, careful he shoulde doe wel, calde the Seruingman aside, which by his outward behauiour seemed to be an honest and discreet man, and began to question with him what his Maister was, of what parentage, of what possibilitie of liuing after his Fathers decease, and how many children he had beside him.

This fellow wel instructed by his holy Brother, without distrust to the man, simply as he thought, said, that he was the sonne and heire

of

of one Maister &c. dwelling in Cheshire, at the Manor of &c. and that he had a poonger brother, but this was heyre to all, and reheark a proper liuing of some fiue hundred markes a yeare. The honest man, knowing diuers Cheshire Gentlemen of that name, gaue credyte to the fellowe, and made no further inquiry, but gaue countenaunce to my poong Maister, who by his flattering speeches had wonne, not onely the Maydes fauour vnto the full, but also the good will of her Mother. so that the match shortly was made vp, and martyed they shoulde bee forsooth, and then should she, her Father and her Mother, ryde home to his Father in Chelshire, to haue sufficient dowry appointed.

To bee breefe, wedded they were, and bedded they had been three or foure nights, and yet for all this fayre shew the Father was a little iealous, and misliked him, but durst say nothing. But at last, after the marriage had beene pall ouer three or foure dayes, it chaunced that her Father and this Seruingman went abroad, and pall through S. Paules Churchyard amongst the Stationers, a Prentile amongst the rest, that was a Cheshire man, and knew this counterfayte Seruingman and his brother, as being borne in the same Parish where his Father dwelt, called to him, and sayde: What I. how doth your Brother P. how doth your Father, liues he still? The fellow answered him all were wel, and lest his brothers wiues father should heare any thing, made no stay but departed.

This acquaintance naming the fellow by his name and asking for his brother, droue the honest Cittizen into a great maze, and doubted he, his wife & his daughter were made Cuckoyes. Wel, he smoothed all vp, as if he had heard nothing, and let it passe till he had sent the man about necessary businesse, and then secretly returned againe vnto the Stationers shop, and began to question with the Boy, if he knew the Seruingman wel, that he cald to him of late. I marry doe I sir quoth he. I know both him and his brother P. I can tel you they haue an honest poore man to their father, and though now in his olde age he bee scarse able to to liue without the helpe of the Parish, yet he is wel beloued of all his neighbors. The man hearing this, although it greeued him that he was thus cosoned by a pallyard, yet seeing no meanes to amend it, he thought to gird his son pleasantly, & therfore had diuers of his friends and honest wealthy neighbors to a Supper: Wel, they being at the time appointed come come, all welcome, who must sit

at the boordes end but my yoong Maister, and he very coyly, badde them all welcome to his fathers house, they all gaue him reuerent thankes, esteeming him to be a man of worship and worth. Assoone as all were set, and the meate serued in, and the Gentlemans Seruingman stood mannerly wayting on his brothers trencher, at last the good man of the house smiling said: Sonne P. I pray you let your man sit downe, and eate such part with vs as God hath sent vs. Marry quoth Maister P. that were wel to make my man my companion, he is wel inough, let him suppe with his fellowes. Why sir sayth he, in fayth he plaine, cal him brother, and bid him sitte downe. Come coossen I. quoth he, make not straunge, I am sure your brother P. wil giue you leaue. At this Maister P. blusht, and askt his Father in lawe what he meant by those wordes? and whether he thought his man his brother or no? I by my faith doe I sonne quoth he, and account thee no honest man that wilt deny thine owne brother and thy father: For sir know I haue learnd your pettegree. Alas daughter quoth he, you are wel marryed, for his Father liues of the almes of the Parish, and this poore Fellowe which he hath made his slaue, is his eldest Brother. At this his wife began to weepe, all was dasht, and what she thought God knowes. Her mother cryed out, but all was bootlesse, Maister P. confest the trueth, and his brother sate downe at supper, and for al that he had the wench. I pray you was not this a Conny-catcher Maister R.G.?

But now to be a little pleasant with you, let me haue your opinion what you deeme of those Amarosos here in England, & about London, that (because the old prouerbe saith, change of pasture makes fat calues, wil haue in euery shire in England a sundry wife, as for an instance your countryman R.B. are not they right Conny-catchers? enter into the nature of them, and see whether your pen had been better imployed in discouering their vill inies, thā a simple legerdemain at cards. For suppose a man hath but one daughter, and hath no other dowrie but her beautie and honestie, what a spoile is it for hir to light in the hands of such an adulterous and incestuous rascal? had not hir father deene better to haue lost forty shillings at cardes, then to haue his daughter so connycatcht and spoyld for euer after? These youths are proper fellows, neuer without good apparel and store of crowns, wel horst, and of so quaint & fine behauior, & so eloquent, that they are able to induce a yong girle to folly, especially since they shadow theyr

villainy with the honeſt pretence of marriage: for their cuſtome is this. When they come into the Cittie or other place of credit, or ſomtime in a country village, as the fortune of their villany leads them, they make inquiry what good marriages are abroad, & on the ſunday make ſurvey what faire and beautiful mayds or widowes are in the Parish: then as their licentious luſt leades them, whether the eye for fauour, or the eare for riches, ſo they ſet downe their reſt, & ſoiourne eyther there or thereabouts, having money at will, and their companions to ſooth up whatſoeuer damnably they ſhal protеſt, courting the maid or widow with ſuch faire words, & ſweet promiſes, that thee is often ſo ſet on fire, that neither the report of others, nor the admonition of their frends, can draw them from the loue of the Poligamoi or bel-ſwaggers of the country. And when the wretches haue by the ſpace of a moneth or two ſatisfied their luſt, they waxe weary, & either faine ſome great iourney for a while to be abſent, & ſo go & viſit ſome other of his wiues, or els if he meane to giue her the bagge, he ſelleth whatſoeuer he can, and ſo leaues hir ſpoild both of hir wealth and honeſtie, then which there is nothing more pretious to an honeſt woman. And becauſe you ſhal ſee an inſtance, I wil tel you a pleaſant tale performd by our villaines in Wiltſhire not long ſince, I wil conceale the parties names, becauſe I thinke the woman is yet aliue.

A pleaſaunt Taie of a man that was marryed to ſixteene Wiues, and how courteouſly his laſt wife intreated him.

IN Wiltſhire there dwelt a Farmar of indifferent wealth, that had but onely one childe, and that was a daughter, a mayd of excellent beautie and good behauior, and ſo honeſt in hir converſation, that the good report of hir vertues was wel ſpoken of in all the cuntry, ſo that what for hir good qualities, & ſufficient dowry that was like to fal to her, ſhe had many ſuters, mens ſons of good welth and honeſt converſation. But whether this mayd had no minde to wed, or ſhe likte none that made loue to her, or ſhe was afrayde to match in haſte leaſt ſhee might repent at leyſure, I know not: but ſhe refuſed all, & kept her ſtil a virgin. But as we ſee oftentimes, the coyeſt maydes happen on the coldeſt marriages, playing like the beetle that makes ſcorne al day of the daintieſt flowers, and at night takes vp his lodging in a cowſhard. So this maid, whom we wil cal Marian, refuſed many honeſt

and wealthy Farmars sonnes, and at last lighted on a match, that for euer after mard her market: for it fel out thus. One of these notable roges, by occupation a taylor, and a fine workman, a reprobate giuen ouer to the spoyle of honest maids, & to the deflowring of virgins, hearing as he trauelled abroad of this Marian, did meane to haue a fling at her, and therefore came into the towne where hir father dwelt and asked worke. A very honest man of that trade, seeing him a passing proper man, and of a very good and honest countenance, and not simply apparelled, sayd he would make trial of him for a garment or two, and so tooke him into seruice: assoone as hee saw him vse his needle, he wondered not onely at his workemanshippe, but at the swiftnes of his hand. At last the fellow (whom we will name William) desired his Maister that he might vse his sheeres but once for the cutting out of a dublet, which his Maister graunted, and he vsed so excellently wel, that although his Maister was counted the best taylor in Wiltshire, yet he found himself a botcher in respect of his new intertained iourneyman, so that from that time forward he was made foreman of the shop, & so pleased the gentlemen of that shire, that who but William talkt on for a good taylor in that shire. Wel, as yong men and maydes meet on sondayes & holydaies, so this taylor was passing braue, & began to frolike it amongst the maydes, & to be very liberal, being ful of siluer and gold, & for his personage a properer man than any was in all the Parish, and made a far off a kind of loue to this Marian, who seeing this William to be a very handsome man, began somewhat to affect him, so that in short time she thought wel of his fauors, & there grew some loue betweene them, insomuch that it came to hir fathers eares, who began to schoole his daughter for such foolish affectiō towards one she knew not what he was, nor whither he would: but in vaine, Marian could not but thinke wel of him, so that her father one day sent for his Maister, and began to question of the disposition of his man. The Maister told the Farmar friendly that what he was hee knew not, as being a meere stranger vnto him: but for his workmanship, he was one of the most excellent beth for needle and sheeres in England: for his behauior since he came into his house, he had behaued himself very honestly and curtrously: wel apparelled he was, and well monied, & might for his good qualities seeme to be a good womans fellow. Although this somewhat satisfied the father, yet he was loth a taylor should cary away his daughter, & that she should be driuē to liue

of

of a bare occupation, whereas she might haue landed men to her husbandes, so that hee and her friendes called her aside, and perswaded her from him, but she flatly told them she neuer loued any but him, and sith it was her first loue, she would not now be turned from it, whatsoeuer hap did afterward befal vnto her. Her father that loued her dearly, seeing no perswasions could draw her from the taylor, left her to her owne libertie, and so shee and William agreed together, that in short time they were married, and had a good portion, and set vp shop, and liued together by the space of a quarter of a yeare very orderly. At last satisfied with the lust of his new wife, he thought it good to visit some other of his wiues (for at that instant hee had sixteene aliue) and made a scuse to his wife and his wiues father to go into Yorkshire (which was his natiue country) and visit his friends, and craue somwhat of his father towards houshold. Although his wife was loth to part from her sweet Wil. yet she must be content, and so welhorst and prouided, away hee rydes for a moneth or two, that was his furthest day, and downe goes he into some other country to solace himself with some other of his wiues. In this meane while one of his wiues that he married in or about Tanton in Sommersetshire, had learnd of his villany, and how many wiues he had, and by long traueyle had got a note of their names and dwelling, and the hands and seales of euerie parish where he was married, and now by fortune shee heard that hee had married a wife in Wilshire, not farre from Malborough: thither hies shee with warrants from the Bishop and diuers Justices to apprehend him, and comming to the Towne where he dwelt, here subtilly inquired at her host of his estate, who told her that he had married a rich Farmers daughter, but now was gone downe to his friendes in Yorkshire, and would be at home againe within a weeke, for hee had been eight weekes alreadie from home. The woman inquired no further for that time, but the next morning went home to the Farmers house, and desired him to sende for his daughter, for shee would speake with her from her husband: the man straight did so, and shee hearing she should haue newes from her William, came very hastily. Then the woman said, shee was sory for her, in that their misfortunes were alyke, in being married to such a runnagate as this Taylor: for (quoth shee) it is not yet a yeare and a halfe since hee was married to me in Somersetshire. As this went colde to the olde mans heart, so stroke it deadly into the mind of Marian, who desiring her to tell the

truth, she out with her testimony, and shewed them how he had at that instant fifteene wiues aliue. When they read the certificate, and sawe the handes and seales of euery parish, the old man fel a weeping: but such was the griefe of Marian, that her sorrow stopt her teares, and she sat as a woman in a trance, til at last fetching a great sigh, she called God to witnes she would be reuenged on him for al his wiues, and would make him a general example of al such graceles runnagates. So she conceald the matter, and placed this her fellow in misfortune in a kinswomans house of hers, so secretly as might be, attending the comming of hir trecherous husband, who returned within a fortnight, hauing in the space hee was absent visited three or foure of his wiues, and now ment to make a short cut of the matter, & sel al that his new wife had, and to trauel into some other shire, for hee had heard how his Somersetshire wife had made inquiry after him in diuers places. Being come home he was wonderfully welcome to Marian, who entertained him with such curtesies as a kind wife could any waies afford him, only ꝑ vse of her body she denied, saying her natural disease was vpon her. Wel to be briefe, a great supper was made, and al her frends was bidden, & he euery way so welcome as if it had bin the day of his bridal, yea al things was smoothed vp so cunningly, ꝑ he suspected nothing lesse then ꝑ reuenge intended against him. Al done as supper was ended, & al had taken their leaue, our taylor would to bed, and his wife with her own handes helpt to vndresse him very louingly, and being laid down she kist him, & said she would go to hir fathers & come again straight, bidding him fal a sleep the whilest: her ꝑ was drowsie with trauel & drinking at supper, had no need of great intreaty, for he straight fel into a sound slumber, the whilest she had sent for his other wife, & other her neighbors disguised, & comming softly into the parlour where he lay, she turnd vp his clothes at his feete, & tyed his legs fast togither with a rope, then waking him, she asked him what reason he had to sleep so soundly. He new wakte out his sleep began to stretch himselfe, and gald his legs with the cord, whereat he wondring said: How now wife? whats that hurts my legs? what are my feet bound togither? Marian looking on him with lookes ful of death, made him this answer: I villaine, thy legs are bound, but hadst thou thy iust desart, thy necke had long since been stretcht at the gallowes, but before thou and I part, I will make thee a iust spectacle vnto the world, for thy abhominable trechery: and with that she clapt her hand fast on the

haire

haire of his head, and held him down to the pillow. William driuen into a wondrous amaze at these words, said trembling: Sweete wife, what strange alteration is this? what meane these words wife? Traytor (q. shee) I am none of thy wife, neither is this thy wife, & with that she brought her forth that he was maried in Somersetshire, although thou art maried to her as wel as to me, and hast like a villaine sought the spoile of fifteene women beside my selfe, & that thou shalt heare by full certificat, & with ỳ there was read the bedrol of his wiues, where hee married them, and where they dwelt. At this hee lay mute as in a traunce, & only for answer held vp his hands, and desired them both to be merciful vnto him, for he confest al was truth, that he had bin a hainous offender, and deserued death. Tush saith Marian, but how canst thou make any one of vs amends? If a man kil the father, he may satisfie the blood in the sonne: if a man steale, he may make restitution: but he that robs a woman of her honestie & virginitie, can neuer make any satisfaction: and therfore for al the rest I wil be reuenged. With that his other wife and the women clapt hold on him, & held him fast, while Marian with a sharpe razor cut off his stones, and made him a gelding. I thinke shee had litle respect where the signe was, or obserued litle art for the string, but off they went, & then she cast them in his face, & said, Now lustful whoremaister, go & deceiue other women as thou hast done vs, if thou canst, so they sent in a surgion to him ỳ they had prouided, & away they went. The man lying in great paine of body, & agony of mind, the surgion looking to his wound, had much ado to stanch the blood, & alwaies he laught hartily when hee thought on the reuenge, and bad a vengeance on such sow-gelders as made such large slits: but at last he laid a blood-plaister to him, & stopt his bleeding, and to be briefe in time heald him, but with much paine. Assoone as he was whole, and might go abroad without danger, he was committed to the gaole, and after some other punishment, banished out of Wiltshire and Somersetshire for euer after. Thus was this lustie cocke of the game made a capon, and as I heard, had litle lust to marry any more wiues to his dying day.

How like you of this conny-catching M. R. G? But because now we haue entred talke of Taylors, let mee haue about with them, for they bee mightie Conny-catchers in sundry kindes. I pray you what Poet hath so many fictions, what Painter so many fancies, as a Taylor hath fashions, to shew the varietie of his arte: changing euery week

the

the shape of his apparrel into new formes, or els he is counted a meere botcher. The venetian and the gallogascaine is stale, and trunke slop out of vse, the rounde hose bumbasted close to the breech, and ruft a-boue the necke with a curle, is now common to euery cullion in the country, & dublets be they neuer so quaintly quilted, yet forsooth the swaine at plough must haue his belly as slye as the courtier, that hee may pisse out at a button hole at the least. And all these strange deuises doth the Taylor inuent to make poore gentlemen connies: for if they were tyed to one fashion, then stil might they know how much veluet to send to the Taylor, and then would his filching abate. But to preuent them, if he haue a french belly, he wil haue a Spanish skirt, and an Italian wing, seamed and quartered at the elbowes, as if he were a souldado readye to put on an armour of proofe to fight in Pile-ende vnder the bloudy ensigne of the Duke of Shoreditch. Thus wil the fantasticke Taylor make poore gentlemen Conies, & euer aske more veluet by a yarde and a halfe then the doublet in conscience requires. But herein lies the least part of their cony-catching: for those graund Taylors that haue al the right properties of the mysterie, which is to be knauish, theeuish, and proude, take this course with courtiers and courtly gentlemen, they finde out slye, inside, lace, drawing out, and making, and then set downe their parcels in a bil, which they so ouerprise, that some of them with very pricking vp of dublets, haue fleest yong gentlemen of whole Lordships, & cal you not this cony-catching M.R.G? To vse the figure Pleonasmos, *Hisce oculis*, with these eies I haue seene Taylors prentises sel as much vales in a weeke in cloth of golde, veluet, satten, taffata, and lace, as hath beene worth thirtie shillinges, and these eares hath heard them sweare when their vales came but to ten shillinges, and yet there were foure prentises in the shop. If the prentises could lurch so mightily, then what did the master? But you must imagine this was a womans taylor, that could in a gowne put seuenteene yards of ell broad taffata, blest be the French sleeues & breech verdingales, that grants them liberty to conny catch so mightily. But this I talke of our London and courtly Taylors: but euen the poore prickloufe the country taylor, that hath scarse any more wealth then his thimble, his needle, his pressing yron, and his sheers, wil filtch as wel as the proudest of that trade in England, they wil to snip and snap, that al the reuersion goes into hel. Now sir, this hel is a place that the taylors haue vnder their shopboord, wher al their stolne

ſtolne ſhéeds is thruſt, and I pray you cal you not this pilling & polling, and flat Conny-catching Maiſter R. G? But becauſe you may ſee whether I ſpeake truth or no, Ile tel you a merry ieſt of a Taylor in Yorke not farre from Petergate, done about fourteene yeare ago, and thus it fel out.

A pleaſant Tale of a Taylor, how he conny-catcht a Gentlewoman, and was made himſelfe a Gonny afterwardes by his man.

IN Yorkeſhire there dwelt a womans Taylor famous for his Art, but noted for his filching, which although hee was light fingerd, yet for the excellency of his workmanſhip, hee was much ſought too, and kept more Journymen, then any ſiue in that citie did: and albeit hee would haue his ſhare of veluet, ſatten, or cloth of golde, yet they muſt find no fault with him, leaſt he half ſpoyld their garment in ſ making. Beſides, he was paſſing proud, and had as haughtie a looke, as if his father had with the diuel lookte ouer Lyncolne: his ordinary dublets were Taffata cut in the ſommer vpon a wrought ſhirt, and his cloake faced with veluet, his ſtockinges of the pureſt granado ſilke, with a French paínde hoaſe of the richeſt billiment lace, a beauer hatte turſt with veluet, ſo quaimely as if he had been ſome Eſpagnolo trickt vp to goe court ſome quaint curteſine, inſomuch that a plaine ſeruingman once meeting him in this attire, going through Wamgat to take aire in the field, thought him at the leaſt ſome Eſquire, and of with his Hat and gaue his worſhip the time of the day, this clawed this Glorioſo by the elbow, ſo that if a Tauerne had been by, a pottle of wine ſhould haue been the leaſt reward for a largeſſe to the ſimple ſeruing man: but this bowical huffe ſnuffe, not content to paſſe away with one worſhip, began to hold the fellow in prate, and to queſtion whoſe man hee was. The fellow curteouſly making a low cringe ſaide, may it pleaſe your worſhip, I ſerue ſuch a Gentleman dwelling in ſuch a place, as thus he anſwered him, he eſpied in the gentlemans boſome a neeble and a threed, whereupon the fellow ſimply ſayd to him, ſir your worſhips man in looking this morning to your doublet, hath left a neeble and a threede on your worſhips breſt, you had beſt take it off, leaſt ſome thinke your worſhip to bee a Taylour. The Taylour not thinkyng the fellow had ſpoken ſimply, but trumpt him, made this reply: what

sawcy knaue doest thou mocke me? what if I bee a taylour, whats that to thee, wert not for shame I would lende thee a boxe on the eare or two, the fellow being plaine, but peeuish and an olde knaue, gathering by his owne words that he was a taylour sayd, sye so God helpe me I mocke you not, but are you a taylour, I marry am I quoth he, why then sayes the seruyng man, all my cappes, knees, and worships, I did to thy apparrel, and therefore maister thanke mee, for it twas agaynst my wil, but now I knowe thee farewel good honest prickelouce, and looke not behynde you, for if you doo, ile swinge you in my scabberd of my sword til I can stand ouer thee, away went Monsier Magnifico frowning, and the seruyng man went into the Citie laughing, but all this is but to describe the nature of the man, now to the secretes of his Art, all the Gentlewomen of the Countrey cryde out vpon him, yet could they not part from him, because he so quaintly fitted their humors, at last it so fel out, that a Gentlewoman not farre from Feroy Brigges, had a taffata gowne to make, and hee would haue no lesse at those dayes then eleuen ells of elbroad taffata, so shee bought so much and readie to send it, shee sayd to her husband in hearing of al her seruingmen, what a spight is this, seeing that I must send alwayes to yonder knaue taylor two yards more then is necessary, but how can we amend vs, all the rest are but botchers in respect of him, and yet nothing grieues mee but we can neuer take him with it, & yet I and mine haue stood by while hee hath cut my gowne out, a pleasant fellowe that was new come to serue her husband, one that was his Clarke and a pretty scholer, answered good mistris giue me leaue to carry your taffata and see it cut out, and if I spy not out his knauery laugh at me when I come home, marry I pritthy do q. his M. and mistris, but whatsoeuer thou seest say nothing least he be angry and spoile my gown, let me alone mistris q. he, and so away he goes to Yorke, & coming to this taylor found him in his shop, & deliuered him the taffata with this message, that his mistris had charged him to see it cut out, not þ she suspected him, but þ els he wold let it ly lõg by him and take other worke in hand, þ taylor scornfully sayd he should, & asked him if he had any spectacles about him, no q. the fellow my sight is poong inough I need no glasses, if you do put them quoth he, and see if you can see me steale a yard of taffata out of your mistresse gowne, and so taking his sheeres in hand, he cut it out so nimbly that hee cut three foreparts to the gown, and four side pieces, that by computation

the fellow geſt he had ſtolne two els & a half, but ſay nothing he durſt. Aſſoone as he had done, there came in more gentlemens men with worke, that the taylor was very buſie & regarded not, the ſeruingman who ſeeing the taylors cloke lying loſe, lifted it away & caried it home with him to his miſtris houſe, where he diſcourſt to his maiſter & his miſtris what he had ſeen, & how he had ſtole the tailors cloake, not to that intent to filtch, but to try an experiment vpon him, for maiſter q. he, when he brings home my miſtris gown, he wil complain of ỹ loſſe of his cloake, & then ſee, doe you but tel him that I am experienced in Magike, & can caſt a figure, and wil tel him where his cloke is without faile, ſay but this ſir, and let me alone: they al agreed, & reſolued to try the wit of their yong man. But leauing him, againe to our taylor: who when he had diſpatcht his cuſtomers, was ready to walke with one of them to the tauern, & then miſt his cloke, ſearcht al about, but find it he could not, neither knew he wt̄ to ſuſpect: ſo with much griefe he paſt it ouer, & when he had ended the gentlewomans gown (becauſe ſhe was a good cuſtomer of his) he himſelf tooke his nag & rid home withal: welcome he was to the gentlewoman and hir huſband, and the gown was paſſing fit, ſo that it could not be amended, inſomuch that the gentlewoman praiſd it, and highly thankt him. Oh miſtris (quoth he) though it is a good gown to you, tis an infortunate gowne to me, for that day your man brought the taffata, I had a cloke ſtolne that ſtood me but one fortnight before in foure pound, and neuer ſince could I heare any word of it. Truly ſaid the Gentleman, I am paſſing ſorry for your loſſe, but that ſame man that was at your houſe is paſſing skilful in Negromancy, and if any man in England can tel you where your cloke is, my man can: marry q. he, and I wil giue him a brace of angels for his labour: ſo the fellow was cald and talkt with all, and at his miſtris requeſt was content to do it, but he would haue his twenty ſhillings in hand, and promiſed if he told him not where it was, who had it, and cauſed it to be deliuered to him again, for his two angels he would giue him ten pounds: vpon this the taylor willingly gaue him the money, and vp went he into a cloſet like a learned clark, and there was three or foure houres laughing at the taylor, he thinking he had bin al this while at Caurake. At laſt downe comes the fellow with a figure drawn in a paper in his hand, & ſmiling cald for a bible, and told the taylor he would tel him who had his cloke, where it was, & helpe him to it againe, ſo that he would be ſworne on a bible to

answer to all questions that he demanded of him faithfully: the taylor granted and swore on a bible, then hee cõmanded al should go out but his maister, his mistres, the taylor and himself. Then he began thus: wel, you haue taken your oth on the holy bible, tel me q. he, did you not cut three foreparts for my mistris gowne? At this the taylor blusht, & began to be in a chafe, and would haue flung out of the doore, but the seruingman said, nay neuer start man, for before thou goest out of this parlour, if thou deniest it, I wil bring the taffata thou stolest into this place, wrapt in thine own cloake: & therfore answere directly to my question, least to your discredit I shew you the trick of a scholler: the taylor halfe afraid, said he did so indeed: and q he, did you not cut foure fiue peeces wher you haue cut but two? yes al is true q. the taylor, why then as true it is, that to deceiue the deceiuer is no deceit: for as truly as you stole my mistris taffata, so truly did I steale your cloake, and here it is. At this the taylor was amazed, the gentleman and his wife laught hartily, & so al was turned to a merryment, the taylor had his cloake again, the gentlewoman hir taffata, and the seruingman twenty shillings, was not this pretty and witty Conny-catching M.R.G.

Thus haue I proued to your maships, how there is no estate, trade, occupation, nor mistery, but liues by Conny-catching, and that our shift at cards compared to the rest, is the simplest of al, & yet forsooth, you could bestow the paines to write two whole Pamphlets against vs poore conycatchers: think M.R.G it shal not be put vp except you graunt vs our request. It is informed vs that you are in hand with a booke named The repentance of a Conny-catcher, with a discouery of secret villainies, wherein you meane to discourse at ful the nature of the stripping Law, which is the abuse offered by the Keepers of Newgate to poore prisoners, and some that belong to the Marshalsea. If you doe so, ye shal do not onely a charitable, but a meritorious deed: for the occasion of most mischiefe, of greatest nipping and foysting, and of al vilanies, comes through the extorting bribery of some coosening and counterfaite keepers and companions, that carry vnlawful warrants about them to take vp men. Wil your worship therfore stand to your worde, and set out the discouery of that, al wee of Whittington Colledge wil rest your beadmen. Otherwise looke that I wil haue the crue of Cony-catchers sweare themselues your professed enemies for euer. Farewel.

Cuthbert Conny-catcher.

FINIS.